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Principles and Methods of Municipal Trading. By DOUGLAS KNOOP, M.A. London: Macmillan, 1912. 8vo, pp. xvii+409. \$3.25 net.

We have had quite an array of books on municipal ownership and operation in England during the last dozen years. Darwin, Meyer, Porter, Lord Avebury, Towler, and G. B. Shaw—not to speak of the National Civic Federation's investigations—have all contributed more or less to our enlightenment on various phases of the question. One might suppose that the ground has been fully covered, and so it has, after a fashion. But the issue of municipal operation has been a stormy petrel of English municipal politics during the last decade or more, and much of the literature relating to it has shown all too plainly the marks of partisan bias. However, the tide of public interest in this subject reached its flood some years ago, and it has now about receded to a point where a fair discussion can hope to command a hearing. Mr. Knoop's volume does not therefore offer a contribution to the literature of controversy, but a *post-bellum* study of many things which the shouting and the clamor of belligerents have hitherto obscured.

The author does well, in his earlier chapters, to clear the ground. There has always been too much stumbling on the threshold of this subject. Municipal trading has usually meant one thing to its advocates and quite another thing to its opponents. The first paragraphs of this book make clear the distinction between municipal enterprises which are, on sanitary or humanitarian grounds, undertaken wholly or in part by public authority, and those which cities undertake to conduct on a self-supporting basis. The former (including baths, cemeteries, workmen's dwellings and milk-supply) do not properly come within the field of municipal trading, nor can the balance-sheet of success or failure be cast in pounds and pence, as many opponents of the policy have assumed. Municipal trading includes only those services (such as water supply, lighting, and transportation) in which there is no fixed purpose to place any part of the cost as a burden upon the local tax rate.

Then follows an extended historical narrative in which the parliamentary attitude toward municipal trading is traced through its various twists and turns. Some of the reasons why water, lighting, and tramway services have been so frequently municipalized in England are explained with greater lucidity than other writers have been able to command; this part of the book, in fact, is a model of fair and accurate exposition. From the major public services, as Mr. Knoop shows, the English municipalities have moved on to the minor, until the entire range

of enterprises in which one or more cities now engage is very extensive indeed.

The greater part of the volume is very properly devoted to an analytical study of methods and results. As to methods, Mr. Knoop shows keen critical ability. The different plans of providing machinery of management for publicly owned services are set forth at length and their relative merits are carefully compared. The author realizes (what Major Darwin foresaw a decade ago) that municipal trading places a heavy burden upon the time and patience of those who serve without pay on the standing committees of borough councils, and especially on the chairmen of those committees. To lessen this load the author advances some interesting suggestions gleaned from the practice of Continental cities. The finance of municipal trading receives scrutiny in a long chapter; but it deserves the lengthy consideration given to it, for no branch of the subject has been so badly obscured by the smoke of controversy. Much of the discussion ranges around the problem of fixing adequate allowances for depreciation, of accumulating reserve and contingency funds, and the proper methods of dealing with plant obsolescence in general. These are difficult questions, as every student of the subject realizes, and to handle them adequately within the limits of fifty pages is not an easy task. But on the whole Mr. Knoop's survey is comprehensive, untechnical, and much less emaciated than such summary discussions usually prove to be.

As to the results of municipal trading Mr. Knoop has very prudently refused to be drawn into any categorical dogmatism. Taking the tests by which others have tried to gauge success or failure, he has little trouble in showing that they are inconclusive at best and misleading at worst. On the other hand he has found nothing to propose in their place. The general conclusion of the book (if it can be called a conclusion at all) is that municipal trading is not *prima facie* a desirable policy, but that under some circumstances private enterprise may be even less desirable; in which case a city may be freely pardoned for choosing the lesser among evils.

Many readers will regard Dr. Knoop's book as unsatisfying; but serious students of the subject will find it nothing of the sort. It is a patient and scholarly piece of work, bearing on every page the marks of a scrupulous regard for accuracy in statement. Only unimpeachable data is used and every bit of this has been winnowed well. One might venture to wish at times that the author had a livelier sense of the practical side of public affairs and more adequately realized the importance

of the human equation in matters of local administration. As it is, the task of reading the book from cover to cover is real labor; but it is labor well enough repaid.

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The New City Government. By HENRY BRUÈRE. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1912. 12mo, pp. xxii+438. \$1.50 net.

The New York Bureau of Municipal Research has spent the better part of seven years in devising, for a single city, more efficient methods of municipal administration. Its work in the metropolis has consumed a great deal of earnest labor and required infinite patience. The results have been indisputably good; but they have come slowly for a city cannot be hurried into righteousness. Little wonder, then, that the Director of the Bureau should have been a bit skeptical concerning the administrative miracles alleged to have been straightway wrought in every other city of the land through the alchemy of commission rule. It was this skepticism that impelled Mr. Bruère to undertake a survey of ten typical commission-governed cities with the object of finding out just how far the new régime had produced real improvement. Has the mere establishment of commission rule really brought about, as by the wave of a magician's hand, so much more progress in civic efficiency than years of costly and painstaking labor in New York, Philadelphia and elsewhere have been able to achieve? That, in a word, is the question which Mr. Bruère asks and answers.

Measured by the standards which the Bureau of Municipal Research has been applying to New York, the commission cities disclose many shortcomings, of course. In many respects the new plan of municipal government has given the citizen more shadow than substance in the way of improved business methods. It has not provided solutions for all or even the greater part of our present-day urban problems. Five plain citizens have nowhere been transformed into administrators of skill and judgment by the simple device of giving them a new title and increased power. Most of us had guessed about as much long ago; but it has remained for Mr. Bruère (or rather for Mr. Shepherdson, who gathered the author's data for him) to prove it from the facts and figures.

The book is not a treatise in discouragement of the commission movement, however. Far from it. Mr. Bruère has found in the cities which he brought under his microscope much that can be commended. And where shortcomings have been disclosed he has not deemed it any